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Maimonides remarks that galls are absolutely necessary for the preparation of ג'י. When R. Meir put vitriol in his ink to make it more durable (Sota, 20a), galls must also have been put in it. Otherwise the addition of vitriol would be of no use, and the writing would not last, as can be seen by experiment. But it is quite indifferent if one should prefer to put the galls in the first mixture itself, or if he would dissolve the described slices in an infusion of galls, as Maimonides has done it.

Finally, Maimonides decides, that albeit it is preferable (למצה) to write the ס"ת with the ink he has used himself, it is not at all prohibited (לעכב) to add the vitriol, so that one now gets a mixture of Indian ink (מדא) and חמר. For thus says R. Jehuda, whose decision is peremptory, as the latest of the rabbis handling this theme, in the name of R. Meir (Sota, l. c.<sup>1</sup>), that it is permitted to use vitriol except to the writing of פ' סוטה (which it shall be possible to obliterate). R. Nissim has also decided thus in a responsum famous with us<sup>2</sup>, and also found here in Egypt, although he does not describe at length the procedure as Maimonides has done it. Also from Jerushalmi Sota (II, 4) it is evident that the addition of vitriol is permitted. It was but in the time that R. Meir was a pupil under the teaching of R. Ishmael, that he, following his master, did not add the vitriol. Afterwards, as he was himself a master, he did so, and from this time derives the tradition of R. Jehuda. Nevertheless, Maimonides made his ink—as has already been said—without vitriol to evade all discussion.

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COPENHAGEN, Aug. 1, 1899.

## A HEBREW POEM IN VINDICATION OF THE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY.

AMONG the MSS. of the Montefiore College there is a small volume in 16mo, containing Hebrew secular poems. They are written in

<sup>1</sup> The omission of the name of R. Meir by Tama has led Löw into the error that the reading in the Gemarah which Maimonides had should be another than ours (cf. Löw, l. c., p. 151 and note 662).

<sup>2</sup> "With us," that is, in Spain. Maimonides writes thus ær. Sel. 1488=1177. See פאר דער, n. 53, the subscription under the last of the answers to the Tyrian scholars. Graetz (*Geschichte d. J.*, VI<sup>2</sup>, p. 300, n. 1) is hence not correct when he writes that Egypt could not be a foreign land for Maimonides in the year 1175.

Italian cursive characters, and are exceedingly difficult to read. In his Catalogue (No. 178) the former owner, Mr. S. J. Halberstam, gave the volume the name שיר הלבנון, which is, however, doubly erroneous. In the first instance, these two words do not represent the title of the little book, but merely the heading of the first poem, which consists of three lines. Secondly, this heading should be read שיר תלונות, the poem being a lament on the death of a certain Daniel, a friend or relative (רודי) of the poet. This poem is followed by several others on the same subject.

The MS. has no regular beginning. It may have been lost or never existed, the author having probably copied his poetic productions into a booklet, while omitting to give it title and preface. In consequence of this omission it is impossible to ascertain the name of the author, unless we get a clue from one poem (fol. 26), headed מזמור שיר חנכת הבית לספר שירות ותשבחות לאלפים ולרבבות, where the words שיר לשלמה occur and are marked by dots. Now we find the same two words in a poem recorded in Dr. Neubauer's Catalogue of the Hebrew MSS. in the Bodleian Library, No. 554. 2. d, and what is more, in a dirge on a certain Isaac. Our MS. contains (fol. 30) an acrostic headed שיר על הנבון יצחק הכהן, and it is therefore not improbable that both poems are by one and the same author. Another poem (fol. 25) is devoted to a certain Isaac of קורייז.

There is, however, another feature common to both MSS. which helps to fix the date of our author approximately. On fol. 6 the latter gives a dirge on Josef Şarfāthi, who seems to be identical with Josef b. Samuel Şarfāthi of whom the Oxford MS. referred to above contains several poems. This is probably the physician Josef Şarfāthi in Rome, to whom, in 1524, the Pope Clement VII granted a renewal of the privileges given to his father Samuel<sup>1</sup>. That he was both poet and physician is confirmed by two verses of the poem, viz. :

לו דרשו גם רופאי גלעד לשר      תמיד להורותם אמת וסגולה  
לו בוחרו השיר עטרת נתנו      גם רודפי משקל ברוב מקהלה

Otherwise the poem gives no information as to his identity.

The date of the author can be fixed with still greater certainty by another poem (fol. 22), bewailing the plague of Florence, which is, however, not the one of 1348, but another which took place in 1539<sup>2</sup>; further, a sonnet on Solomon of פונציפונציאה (fol. 24 verso),

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stern, *Urkundliche Beiträge über die Stellung der Päpste zu den Juden*, I, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> As to the plague in Italy cf. Fioravanti, *Il reggimento della pesta*, Venice, 1594.



that Copernicus' work, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, was not published till 1543, the poem was probably composed under its immediate influence, and thus represents perhaps the oldest Jewish defence of the Copernican theory. It is remarkable for its enlightened views, and breathes a spirit antagonistic to the trend of scholastic Philosophy as well as to the encroachments of practical Qabbalah, which just at this period had found its most influential promoters.

It is not to be wondered at that the language of the poem is allusive rather than outspoken, as it had to deal with inborn prejudices. Although nearly every verse is more or less succinct in this respect, it is particularly the term תכונה, used both in the heading and in verse 4, which points to astronomy, while in verse 10 the author plainly denounces the use of amulets, having, in regard to this latter, probably a passage of the *Mōreh* (Munk, *Le Guide*, I, p. 271) in mind. The poem seems altogether to imply that, free from the dangers of the effete theories on the universe, Maimuni's philosophical writings could now be studied without apprehension. The verses 5 to 7 were probably written with the same object, although guarding against the possible reproach of endangering pure religion. The verses 8 and 9 reflect two of Maimuni's principles of the creed, viz. the existence of God, and the belief in prophecy. The most distinct allusion to the obsolescence of the old *Weltanschauung* is to be found in verse 13, where the author threatens that he will "trample on the head of people's corrupt ideas."

The form of the poem is that of the Spanish school, each half-verse consisting of 2 tenūōth, jathed, 2 ten., jathed, 2 ten.<sup>1</sup> (= Arab. Kāmil). A later owner has made a copy of the poem, in inverted manner, at the end of the volume. The text runs thus:—

יום [קם] <sup>2</sup> בנו אֶדְרֶת והשביע <sup>3</sup>	לומד בחכמת זר ומשפיע
אז ענתה חכמה ומי הסיר	ממעשי העם והפריע
מתי יתִּיה אל ויקים לי	נבור ואמיץ לב להושיע
הן כל אשר ידע תכונתי	יעלה מרום קרת ויריע
נבר אשר יבא בחברתי	אאיר מאורי לו ואופיע
לי מאוני יושר ובם אשקול	הכל ולי פלס להכריע
אתן ליודעי חן וגם אבחן	כל טענת <sup>4</sup> מופת ואודיע
אגיד במופת לך הכי נמצא	יוצר לכל גופים ומניע

<sup>1</sup> ---○---○---

<sup>2</sup> To be read thus on account of the metre.

<sup>3</sup> Copyist's addition.

<sup>4</sup> Copyist reads and vocalizes מַעֲנֶה.

עבְרִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹפְרִים נְבוֹאוֹת אֶל	אֶשְׁלִיךְ בְּבוֹר תַּחְתִּית וְאֶשְׁקִיעַ
אֶל הוֹבְרֵי שַׁח אֲנִי אֶסְגֹּר	דְּלִתֵּי נְבוֹאוֹת שׂוֹא וְאֶצְנִיעַ
אֶכְחִישׁ מְצִיאוֹת שֶׁד וּגַם לִילִית	עִם מַעֲשֵׂה כֶּשֶׁף וְקִמְיַע
פְּנִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא כִהְלַכָה הֵם	בֵּרַת אֲנִי אֶהְרֹס וְאֶרְשִׁיעַ
עַל רֹאשׁ סִבְרוֹת עִם מְזִיפוֹת	אֶדְרוֹךְ בְּרִנְגְלֵי בֵּין וְאֶפְסִיעַ
כָּל עֹקְרֵי עֵקֶר וּפּוֹקְרֵי דֵת	אֶשְׁפִּיל שְׂאוֹל נִצָּחִם וְאֶכְנִיעַ
סוֹף כָּל דְּבָרִים יֵשׁ בְּאֻמַּתִּי	מִבְּחֵן לְאַמֶּת כָּל וּגְבִיעַ

## TRANSLATION.

1. On the day when Ibn Addereth arose and conjured the students [not to be] too assiduous in the study of the stranger's<sup>1</sup> wisdom,
2. Philosophy replied: Who has estranged people, and caused them to abandon my works?
3. When will God raise a champion for me, a strong-hearted one to help me?
4. Let him who is acquainted with my nature mount the parapet and proclaim aloud.
5. On him who seeks my company my lustre shall gloriously shine.
6. Mine are well-balanced scales to weigh and decide everything.
7. I bestow grace on my friends, and endow them with the power of convincing by argument.
8. I give thee proof whether a Creator and Prime Mover of all beings exists [or not].
9. Such Hebrews as doubt divine prophecies, I will throw down and cast into the deepest pit.
10. For those who augur by means of the horoscope, I close and conceal the doors of [their] false prophecy.
11. I deny the existence of demons and Lilith, as well as all kinds of witchcraft and amulets.
12. I tear down and condemn all notions that deviate from regulation and law.
13. I put down the foot of reason, and trample on the head of all corrupt notions of the people.
14. And those lawless ones who endeavour to eradicate principles of faith, I humble and put their boast to shame.
15. Finally: I have in my sack a criterion for everything, and a goblet [for discovering the truth].

H. HIRSCHFELD.

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle. The restriction in question referred to the study of Philosophy before the age of thirty.